

# SUPPLEMENT TO THE 'EYANPAHA.'

AUGUST 15, 1910.

## ENGLISH SERMON

Delivered by Rev. Father Martin, O. S. B. on the second day of the Catholic Indian Congress, Fort Yates, N. D.—

Sunday June 26, after the gospel of the Pontifical High Mass celebrated by Rt. Rev. Joseph Busch, Bishop of Lead, S. D. in presence of His Excellency, the most Rev. Diomedo Falconio, Apostolic Delegate to the United States, and Rt. Rev. Vincent Wehrle, Bishop of Bismarck, N. D.—

After having addressed the Indian congregation in the Sioux language the preacher continued as follows:—

"I consider it my duty to express a special most cordial welcome, in the name of the Catholic Mission and Missionaries of Standing Rock, to His Excellency, the most Rev. Diomedo Falconio, to Rt. Rev. Vincent Wehrle, the new Bishop of Bismarck, N. D. and to Rt. Rev. Joseph Busch, the new Bishop of Lead, S. D.—Bishop Wehrle having jurisdiction over the northern part of the Standing Rock Reservation, and Bishop Busch over the southern portion of it—a most sincere welcome also to Rev. William Ketcham, the indefatigable Director of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions in Washington, D. C. to whom we really owe the splendor and important significance of this occasion, as he was the originator of the idea of this day by inducing the Papal Delegate to visit the North West and participate in this Congress—another heartfelt welcome to Rev. Father Jerome of Devil's Lake (Fort Totten) the Pioneer and Senior Missionary among the Sioux, who in early days commenced his career as Indian Missionary with the Sainly Indian Apostle, Bishop Marty of blessed memory, right here on the place, where we are assembled to day, and which still shows many marks of his zeal and energy—a hearty, a thrice cheerful welcome also to the Indian missionaries from other reservations and to the visiting priests and Sisters from the neighboring cities. It is indeed a most inspiring spectacle to have so many church dignitaries in our midst and an honor relished and appreciated beyond expression as it never as yet had come to any Indian Congress and mission before. His Excellency, the Papal Delegate, has really acted the part of the good Shepherd, yes—of the very best of shepherds, in imitation of his divine Master, he has indeed left for a while the ninety nine sheep on the mountain to give his precious time to the one sheep, lost as it were, in the far away Dakota desert, by visiting the poorest fold and portion of Christ's flock. Yes, generously his Excellency has left the sheep in the high places, has left behind him, as it were, for a while the care and

attention he is otherwise wont to give to Bishops and priests and important business transactions in overseeing and ruling the church affairs of the country, and has undertaken this long and tedious journey to bring Christ's message and blessing to his red brethern of the faith.—

When we were assembled in solemn council and Society meeting yesterday evening in the bowery, out on the prairie, beyond the mission church, and the officers and delegates of the different societies had expressed their delight of heart in the joyful accents of their simple faith, and when the Apostolic Delegate as a true pastor of souls arose and spoke well chosen words of encouragement and good advice, of satisfaction and gratification to them, and finally dismissed them for the evening with his fatherly blessing, and when the golden rays of the evening sun sent their last greetings to the parting multitude, when it was slowly sinking beneath the western horizon, bidding a reluctant farewell to a most peaceful and edifying scene—then I say, another picture presented itself to my mind, yea, forced itself upon my memory, when I thought of the same evening, of the evening of June 25, thirty four ('4) years ago. It was then, on that memorable evening of June 25, 1876, that the battle on the little Big Horn in Montana, unduly called the Custer Massacre, had just been fought, and the evening sun of that fatal June day went down and cast its last rays on as dismal and gloomy a sight as ever was witnessed anywhere or recorded in American history. Soon afterwards, as soon as the sad intelligence had reached civilization, the telegraphic wires flashed the mournful message throughout the length and breadth of the land, from one end to the other, and brought grief into many an American home, when word was received, that a dear father, a darling brother, a beloved faithful husband had been killed by the hostile Indians in the far west, thus bringing untold sorrow and affliction to many families throughout the country. The

news of the total destruction of General Custer's whole command brought at once consternation and surprise and greatest disappointment to the War Department and the Indian Office at Washington. But, how different does the scene appear to-day—what a remarkable and admirable change do we not behold and witness! Strange indeed it is that to-day an Apostolic man of peace and good will should come from our great capitol city of Washington, wending his way with a faithful companion, who is animated by the same noble feelings as the best and most loyal friend of the Indian, to the Sioux country in these hot June days, that were so fatal to our army in the summer of 1876. And these two men of peace, one the representative of the Universal Catholic Church in this country, and the other the head of the bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, meet here with some even who in those days of horror and calamity steeped their hands in the blood of the white man, but nevertheless they come and unite with these savages of old, who are now fervent and zealous christians, unite with them and their descendants in worshipping the great Prince of peace before whom all the nations bow in adoration, praise and thanksgiving. We are then exceedingly glad to greet you here, Beloved Prelates, who have followed the invitation of your missionaries to grace this occasion by your august presence.

As far as exterior results are concerned we have perhaps not much to show, we feel at least very humble about it—but our consolation is that the Beauty of the King's daughter is within, that is, in the immortal souls of our Indian converts. To accomplish anything Indian Mission work must be a labor of love, but above all a labor of persevering iron patience. It is said that the Eastern nations, in the far orient cannot be hustled, and the same must also be said of the tribes on the American continent, especially those in the west & north west—Progress is of necessity slow, and it will always be a difficult task to convert a strongly conservative people with their set-

tled customs, habits and convictions to new activities and to new social, moral and religious ideas and views.

When we commenced work here in 1884 we found many that had been baptized by the early missionaries, but they had not the time nor chance to instruct them so thoroughly as to make permanently practical Catholics out of them—they were practically wandering nomads up to that time, and the priests had to follow them, wherever they went, to do any good among them. It was the general rather discouraging opinion in those days, that no adult Indian could be lastingly converted. People, and very good people at that, told us freely that all hope was in the schools, with the children and younger people, that it was absolutely useless to try to convert an adult, it was labor lost except if we would just perhaps by chance meet a dying man or woman to whom we could quickly open heaven by baptism or by a hurried absolution and Extreme Unction, but otherwise it was not worth while to try. The dictum and conviction seemed to prevail in all minds, that the only good Indian was a dead one. We however, in spite of all things to the contrary, thought it would be a poor rule that would not work both ways, and so commenced work, at once both, in the schools and in the camp, among the children and adults. We learned their language in order to be able to preach to them in their own tongue and to speak thus directly to their hearts, to gain thereby, if possible, their confidence. We kept on instructing and inviting them to church, as it was our ambition to get a dozen or more of well instructed families to form them in church societies. It was a work of greatest patience indeed. For four (4) long years we had down at St. Benedict's Mission besides the school children only one or two regular communicants—here at the Agency the same conditions were prevailing. But in the year 1888 we finally had a number of Catholic families ready for the Sacraments, and they furnished at once also the first members for the St. Joseph's Society for the



men and for the St. Mary's Society for the women. And as then the good work was firmly established and the Societies organized, the ice seemed to be broken and new converts steadily followed their brethren into the church, and up to this day this following continues, as almost on the return from every mission trip the missionaries report the baptism and conversion of some old men and women, sometimes from 70 to 80 years old. Indeed the Dead Indian is not the only good Indian anymore, to the contrary the Live Indian, the Indian who is very much alive in the best sense of the word, is our ideal Indian now. It is and always has been with the Indian also as with his white brother, if he is not good in life he will not be good in death, as our own true and lasting worth or worthlessness only really commences at the portals of our Eternity. The pioneer soldiers and frontier men were used to call things by their real names and when they said that the only good Indian was a dead one, they wanted to say how difficult it was to raise a people from savagery and heathenism, and bring them into the light of true civilization and christianity. Our favorite Indian at the present day is the sober, honest, industrious and truly christian Indian. To make him good in and for life and death, for time and eternity, shall be our constant endeavor. If the Indian was good and perfect already, no missionaries need approach him, he could be left alone, and no special efforts would have to be made in his behalf—he would then not need any more attention than his white christian and catholic neighbors. But as he has not the Catholic traditions as we have, as he is new in the faith or has yet to be brought to the true fold, he needs special care and attention. But once converted and brought under the benign and powerful influence of God's holy grace, the Indian Convert is certainly an object worthy of our love care and admiration. Or is it not a wonderful work of God's grace and of divine faith to behold a man, who 25 or 30 years ago was known as a savage, walking in the shadows and darkness of paganism and buried in ignorance and all kinds of heathenish superstitions and vices—thinking of hardly anything else but murder and robbery, to behold this same man now wending his steps regularly every Sunday to his humble mission church to hear Mass, remembering that it is Sunday, the Lord's day, which his white brother often forgets, to see this man regularly at the Table of the Lord receiving his Lord and God, whose commandments he is trying to follow now as zealously as he was intent on their infraction and violation in years gone by. Certainly here is a change from on High, and if anything reveals the power of God's grace, it is the conversion of a Savage to the true and only saving faith. But to accomplish this, is not the work of a moment. The results and successes of the Indian mission work do not readily appear on the surface, but you take the registers, records and census books as they are

kept in the different mission houses throughout the Indian country, and then the real idea of the magnitude and the hardships of the work will be revealed to you. Almost every baptism intimates some extra exertion and sacrifice on the part of the missionary, almost every burial is preceded by a sick call of from 20 to 100 miles distance in the summer's heat and the winter's cold & storm. And all this means any amount of deprivation and sacrifice. It is sometimes maintained that the life of a simple lay brother in his monastery, represents or demands the greatest sacrifice, as it is a constant routine of prayer and labor, and labor and prayer, with no earthly gratification for human nature. But the life of an Indian missionary is still more sacrificial or penitential, if you will, as in it there is absolutely nothing that appeals to mere sensual human nature—all is sacrifice. When the priest makes his long missionary trips among white people he may see mostly some little comfort ahead at the end of his long way, some consolation that appeals to his heart and encourages him, some gratification that gives him relief after the tedious drive; but the Indian missionary, as a rule, has nothing of the kind in sight before him. If I remember how St. Paul in one of his epistles enumerates the dangers and perils he had to go through in his apostolic life, perils of waters, of the sea, in the wilderness, perils from false brethren etc., I am at times tempted to think that the perils of an Indian missionary, especially in older times were not any less. Human nature is very much the same everywhere, whether bound in white red or black, we find very much the same faults and weaknesses everywhere, and with a people only newly arising from the darkness and shadows of paganism the more so, as our patience is thus put to a most severe and trying test we have to be patient and charitable to a fault, & therefore I appeal today to the hearts of our Bishops here present to be patient, most patient, with the priests and people confided to their apostolic care. The reward of this patience and forbearance will not be wanting as I am convinced that in the long run the cares weighing heavily on their mitres will not come so much from their Indian charges as from other quarters. Our Indian converts did often not come up to our expectation, it is true, but yet, when I had occasion and still have to examine Christian and Catholic life among our white brethren in the North West, I often found that our Indian Catholics compare very favorably with them. Some times, when I felt discouraged over my school work, it would happen that I had a sick call to the Camp somewhere in the absence of the other priests—and when I saw how well prepared the sick one was, how his relations and friends had gathered around him and prayed and answered the prayers of the priest with a fervor of the early christians, I returned to my work with new courage and love being convinced that it was fully possible to convert an adult Indian and also to keep

him in his faith to the end—often deriving more consolation from the edifying life of older christians than from the young ones, who had all advantages of instruction and a good christian education. Indeed, it is my firm conviction, that when the angels trumpet will call the dead on the last accounting day, large numbers of older christian men and women will arise from our cemeteries who had sanctified themselves by their childlike faith the best they understood it in the simplicity of their hearts.

Speaking of the labors of the missionaries, although being counted as one of them, I nevertheless feel myself free to enlarge on their sacrifice without violating in the least the rules of modesty or humility, because having had charge of a school not so much exterior mission work fell to my lot. As a whole I enjoyed the conveniences and homelike advantages of school life, which it is very true, was at times also fraught with great cares trials and difficulties. It was seldom that I was called out on lengthy trips, but when it happened it always taught me a lesson. When at times during vacation, when the other fathers were absent on a sport recreation or attending a Catholic Congress on some other reservation, I had a sick call at some distance, I generally received on the part of the callers every possible consideration, the best teams and vehicles were generally placed at my disposal to make the best and fastest time, and at the respective places everything possible was done for my personal comfort. But in spite of all it was just on these accidental mission trips, that my heart went out every time in most sincere sympathy to those men, who had to travel over those roads at all seasons, often with poorly led teams and in hard riding wagons, in the most inclement weather and under other most uninviting and discouraging conditions and circumstances.

When I mention the labors of the priest, I do not mean to ignore the labors and untiring efforts of the good Sisters, who during all these long years have helped the missionaries in their arduous work in the Indian country, bearing with them the heat and burden of the day, some of them 10, 20, 25, even thirty years. These noble generous souls have sacrificed themselves altogether to God for the benefit of this humble race. Their pious prayers often penetrated the heavens in behalf of a hard hearted people, and followed the missionaries on their long and tedious journeyes and helped to make their efforts successful. In the schools their untiring and persevering exertions day by day most patiently tried to form the character of the Indian children entrusted to their care—very raw and uncouth material to begin with indeed—but whom they fashioned by and by into attractive civilized and christianized beings and useful members of society proving themselves to those children as their spiritual mothers in more than one sense of the word. Others adorned the church and altar with their skilful hands making everything lovely and

attractive in God's holy service.—Others lent their voices in singing the praises of the most high in God's temple during the adorable sacrifice of the Mass and other services. If the cup of water given to the wayside beggar will enjoy its rich reward, the more so these good and humble Sisters are entitled to the fullest recompensation for the glorious work they have done all these years in church and school with most commendable zeal and devotion.

The missionaries of old in all countries as for instance St. Boniface and his disciples and others had the help of pious Sisters, of St. Lioba, Walburgis and others—Our Lord Himself appreciated the services of the pious women that followed him with his blessed mother during his earthly ministry, and remembered them even in his last hours granting to some of them the privilege of standing beneath his cross in his last dying moments. St. Paul in his epistles also often has reference in gratitude to the kind services of good women who supported and aided him in his apostolic labors. Thus a just and merciful Lord will also richly reward the sacrifices of all religious consecrated to God, who work for the interests of His Sacred Heart among the lowly and despised who are so apt to be forgotten and neglected.

Let us then all be glad and rejoice today over this most happy reunion, when our Most Rev. Apostolic Delegate is with us, as the special representative of our Holy Father, he who has looked in admiration and love on the face of the Vicar of Christ on earth, and received Christ's message from his lips, when our Bishops as the true successors of Christ's Apostles, as the true pastors of our souls and shepherds of our hearts are with us to encourage and inspire us by their most welcome presence, together with so many Indian missionaries and other worthy priests, let us rejoice, I say, with all our hearts and unite in worshipping the one true God of all of us, preparing ourselves by prayer and a good christian life for an eternal inseparable Reunion in heaven, when all, bishops, priests and people, pastors and flocks, will be united in the one fold of the heavenly shepherd and chief pastor of souls for all Eternity. Amen.

At the close of the Congress the Papal Delegate addressed the Indians, he exhorted them to a firm belief in all that the Catholic Church teaches, to a strong adherence to the Holy Father and his representatives the Bishops, and Priests and recommended to them a great love and confidence in the Mother of God, imitating every day her holy life, a great desire of becoming better year after year and especially not forgetting to cultivate the virtue of temperance and sobriety in all things.